

5.3

Handout:

Overview of Modern Headline Formulas of Good Headlines

HOW TO
[DO SOMETHING]
IN
[#]
SIMPLE STEPS

HOW TO PERFORM A SEEMINGLY COMPLICATED OR CHALLENGING TASK IN A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF SIMPLE STEPS

EXAMPLES:

1. Perfect Makeup: 8 Super-Easy Steps for Looking Flawless—Fast!
2. How to Crochet: Step-by-Step Tutorials for Beginners
3. How to Make Creme Brulee In Your Own Kitchen in 10 Easy Steps

NOTES:

- Swap out “simple” for a similar adjective: easy, surprising,
- Keep the number of steps lower so the whole process you're describing is still “easy” (50 easy steps isn't all that easy)

[DO SOMETHING]
LIKE
[THIS EXPERT]
WITHOUT
[THIS NEGATIVE]

HOW TO PERFORM A SEEMINGLY COMPLICATED OR CHALLENGING TASK WITHOUT ANY OF THE USUAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS THAT GO WITH IT.

EXAMPLES:

1. Meeting Your Favorite Celebrities Without Stalking Them
2. How to Dress Like Kanye West at Walmart
3. Make Your Own Chicago Deep Dish Pizza Without All the Calories

NOTES:

- Be sure to choose an expert with a clear angle: “Sing Like Adele” or “Design Like Apple”
- Wasting time, effort, and resources are common problems, e.g. “Wash Your Car Like a Pro Without Wasting Any Water” or “How to Test Your App Design Quickly Without Users”

[#]
LESSONS
I LEARNED
WHILE
[DOING
SOMETHING]

WHILE YOU WERE DOING SOMETHING (RELATED OR UNRELATED), YOU LEARNED A NUMBER OF VALUABLE LESSONS.

EXAMPLES:

1. 5 Lessons You'll Learn From Study Abroad
2. 9 Life-Changing Lessons Kids Learn From Cooking
3. 20 Secrets Expectant Moms Will Learn By Visiting Friends with Kids

NOTES:

Your lessons don't have to directly relate to the activity. In fact, the difference between the two could have great appeal, e.g. "Lessons I Learned About Teaching While Visiting the Taj Majal" or "12 Ways to Survive Freshmen Year That I Learned By Watching Kindergarteners"

[#]
SECRET / HIDDEN
WAYS
TO
[DO SOMETHING]

YOU'VE GOT A NUMBER OF NON-OBVIOUS TIPS, TRICKS, AND LESSONS TO SHARE ABOUT SOMETHING, LIKE A CHALLENGING TASK OR A SEEMINGLY SIMPLY PLACE OR THING.

EXAMPLES:

1. 14 Secret Drinks You Can Order from Starbucks That Aren't On the Menu
2. 25 Things You Didn't Know You Could Sell on eBay
3. 7 Secrets Graphic Designers Won't Tell You about Effective Website Design

NOTES:

Your "Secrets" won't always be completely new information, but they shouldn't be common knowledge either. Do a simple Google search and see how "secret" they are.

[#]
[CRAZY ADJECTIVE]
THINGS
YOU SHOULD
[DO OR KNOW]
[BEFORE/
DURING/
AFTER]
YOU
[DO SOMETHING]

YOU'VE GOT A LIST OF UNUSUAL THINGS - CRAZY THINGS - THAT PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT, AND THESE THINGS RELATE TO SOME KIND OF TASK SOMEONE MIGHT DO OR EXPERIENCE THEY MIGHT HAVE.

EXAMPLES:

1. 40 Breathtaking Places to See Before You Die
2. 8 Things You MUST Know Before Working the IT Help Desk
3. 25 Greatest Movies to Watch On Netflix Before This Year's Oscars

NOTES:

- The bigger the action - "...Before You Die" - the bigger the adjective should be to describe those things you're writing about, e.g. "19 Must-Have Weapons for Need for the Most Epic Multiplayer Game Ever" or "17 Mind-blowing Homes You Could Buy After You've Won the Lottery"

- There should be a reason you're promoting the "things" in relation to the event or action. If they're unrelated, the reader might not understand, e.g. "12 Ice Cream Flavors to Try Before Writing That Next Book".

More Headline Formulas:

<http://olyvia.co/popular-blog-title-templates-that-work/>

<http://harrisonamy.com/41-classic-copywriting-headline-templates/>

Online Headline Generators:

<https://www.inboundnow.com/apps/kill-writers-block/>

<https://www.portent.com/tools/title-maker>

<http://www.ravi.io/buzzfeed-title-generator>